

NAVY Recruiter

Magazine for Navy Recruiters

June 2001



NAVY Recruiter

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On the cover:

Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, May 21, 2001 — Fireworks explode at the conclusion of the movie "Pearl Harbor" aboard *USS John C. Stennis* (CVN 74). The aircraft carrier served as a stage for the movie's premiere showing. More than 2,000 people, including original survivors of the Pearl Harbor attack, were in attendance. U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Joshua R. Langhus. Additional artwork by JO2 Bashon W. Mann, Editor, NR.

On the back cover:

Navy Recruiter magazine honors the Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit's Distinguished Graduates. Photos by JOC Sheri Crowe and DM3 Prince Ikegwuono, USN.



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From the Top

In April, May, and June, the Navy Recruiting Command received unanticipated goal cuts, reducing our FY01 accession goal from 56,348 to 54,220. It is important that you realize that these reductions in goal were the result of a mid-year adjustment by the Navy's manpower requirements experts and were made to ensure that the Navy achieves its FY01 authorized end strength goal. It also is important that you understand the close link between the Navy's legislated end strength and our recruiting goal.

Each year, Congress mandates an end strength requirement that the Navy must meet by 30 September. In other words, Congress dictates how many Sailors must be serving in the Navy at the end of each fiscal year. The margin on either side of that congressionally mandated end strength number is very narrow, plus 1% or minus 0.5%. By law, the end strength number must fall within that margin.

The formula for determining end strength is straightforward: start with the number of Sailors serving as of 1 October, add the number recruited, then subtract the number who attrite, the number who retire, and the number who don't reenlist upon reaching their EAOS. The resulting number is the end strength for the fiscal year. Thus, recruiting is one of the key variables in the equation for achieving fiscal year end strength.

Our recruiting goals are established in the summer months preceding the start of the new fiscal year, using projected retention and attrition levels. Navy leadership had calculated our accession goal based upon anticipated retention and attrition levels

similar to those experienced in FY00. Last year's retention was the best it had been in ten years, and the attrition level last year was also slightly lower than historical levels. Based on those favorable FY00 rates, it had been projected that we would need to recruit 56,348 in order to meet the Navy's mandated end strength goal.

The recent goal cuts stem directly from the significant improvement in retention and reduced attrition achieved during the early months of this fiscal year. For example, reenlistment rates across all terms of service are up 6.4% from the same time last year, and first term attrition is also down from last year. Had we pursued and attained our original recruiting goal of 56,348, those improved retention and attrition numbers would have pushed fiscal year end strength beyond the allowable margin.

So credit for these recent goal cuts is shared across the fleet. I've mentioned in previous columns that we, in recruiting, are part of a team effort to man the Navy with the most qualified people available. That team includes fleet Sailors who work diligently to make sure the best Sailors stay Navy. It also includes the many dedicated instructors and staff at the Recruit Training Command and in our A Schools, who reduce attrition by going out of their way to help recruits succeed and excel during training.

As recruiters, you also significantly influence Navy-wide retention and attrition rates by grooming and preparing applicants for training and by aggressively leading the future Sailors in our DEP pool. Your sustained efforts in working with our DEPpers actually yield a double benefit.

Not only does your investment reduce DEP attrition, which allows us to lower the new contact objective; but it also means that recruits are better prepared when they get to boot camp, thereby reducing boot camp attrition.

Although the equation used to calculate fiscal year end strength resulted in goal cuts in April, May, and June, that same equation could just as easily trigger a mid-year goal increase. Should economic fluctuations, a decrease in SRB funding, or myriad other elements trigger a decline in retention rates or a rise in attrition, a goal increase might be necessary to meet the mandated end strength number. Though recruiting is but one variable in the end strength equation, it's the variable that responds most quickly to the need for any end strength adjustment. On a macroscopic scale, the Navy can open or shut the 'throttle valve' of recruiting more quickly than it can engineer either of the other two variables in the equation.

The close link between recruiting and end strength means your success in bringing qualified young people into the Navy plays a significant role in the Navy's ability to meet the personnel requirements mandated by Congress. The bottom line is that we must continue to work as part of a larger team, dedicated to putting — and keeping — the most qualified Sailors in the world's greatest Navy. This venerable institution and our Nation — no less than





Navy Recruiting Command Master Chief CNOMC(SW) Kenneth W. Cromer

I really like our new advertising slogan: “*Accelerate Your Life!*” What have you done to *Accelerate Your Life* today? As I travel around the force, I don’t see enough Sailors putting actions behind their words. Let’s take a short look at how you can enable yourself to live that *accelerated* life.

You must have a well thought out plan, and follow that plan. You might get lucky on occasion, but as a general rule nothing worthwhile happens without sound planning, and actions to accomplish the plan. The plan should be designed to make you a better Sailor today than you were yesterday, every day. You won’t always attain that goal, but it’s not so much attainment of the goal, as it is the desire and effort to attain it that makes the difference. It’s OK to make mistakes, but don’t let the stumbles stop you.

Your plan must address all aspects of the life you want to accelerate. Quality of life and quality of work walk hand in hand. You can’t have one without the other. Your plan should include, not just your work, but things designed for your personal growth and development, your family, recreation and relaxation, your finances, any area of your life that is important to you.

By now you’re thinking, “That’s easy to say Master Chief, but I have goal to make!” My answer to that is that if you will focus on doing your personal best, instead of how many hours you need to work to make goal, goal will happen as you pass by.

Practically every time I run across a recruiter, or a recruiter’s spouse, with concerns about the number of hours they have to work, a quick look at the planner reveals that the recruiter has a poor plan, and is not following what little is there. If you focus on the number of hours, you will plan you’re work to occupy those hours. Focus on the amount of work instead, and allot the amount of time you will do it in.

Every minute you expend at work that is not directed toward self-improvement (advancement study, physical fitness, training), developing subordinates (DEP or recruiter leadership), or moving someone closer to a commitment to the Navy (prospecting or processing), is a waste of your time.

You don’t have enough time to waste any of it. Take an honest look at your workday, probably one-third is actually productive work, and the rest is spent on “time-wasters”. Cut your “time-wasters” in half, and you might find you get twice the work done in half the time.

Before you leave for the office each morning, look yourself in the mirror and resolve to give your very best effort today, and follow through. Plan your work and work your plan. In other words, get to the office on time, hit it hard, get your work done and go home at a decent hour.

When you get home, leave your work at the office. Make the time you have with your family, or alone to yourself, count. Whether it’s a hobby, religious activities, spending quality time with the spouse and kids, continuing your education, or just unwinding in front of the TV, *Accelerate Your Life!*

‘With a sure deck ‘neath your feet,
Your bow, to heavy weather take,
And by force of will, from storm to storm,
Leave calm seas in your wake.’

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PUYALLUP CITY COUNCIL HONORS SERVICE MEMBERS WITH PROCLAMATION



Don Mallory, Mayor of Puyallup, Wash., shakes hands with LT Romadel E. De Las Alas of Navy Recruiting District Seattle after presenting a proclamation declaring Monday, April 16, 2001 as “United States Navy Appreciation Day” during a Puyallup City Council meeting Monday.
(Photo by JO1 Michael B. Murdock)

Story by JO1 Michael B. Murdock
NRD Seattle Public Affairs Officer

During an April 16 meeting of the Puyallup, Wash., City Council meeting, Mayor Don Mallory presented a proclamation declaring Monday, April 16, 2001 as “United States Navy Appreciation Day”. While the proclamation directly addresses

the heroic actions of the 24 service members who were held in China for 11 days, it also recognizes all men and women serving in America’s Armed Forces who protect and defend this country in times of peace and peril. Accepting the proclamation was Lt. Romadel E. De Las Alas of Navy Recruiting District Seattle, who thanked the city council for recognizing the sacrifices of America’s service men and **NR**women.

Essex Sailors

keep up the PACE

Story and photos by JOC Roger Dutcher
USS Essex (LHD 2) Public Affairs Office



Left: A PACE class hard at work while out to sea under instruction from a college professor.

Life at sea presents many challenges for Sailors interested in furthering their education. Normal duties, watches, and frequent unexpected evolutions compete for valuable time. Yet about 130 crewmembers from *USS Essex* (LHD 2) are overcoming those obstacles by taking courses through the Program for Afloat College Education (PACE).

The classes onboard *Essex* are offered on three different levels. Depending on their skill level, students may participate in either an Academic Skills class or English 1301, both facilitated by a contracted instructor, with

other subjects to be offered in the future. Courses are also available on CD-ROM.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handler) Chief Hernan Lopez, the ship's PACE Coordinator, said the ship contracted the instructor, Ms. Carrie Carr, a part-time adjunct professor from Central Texas College, specifically for the large number of people who need to focus on their language skills. "These types of skills are important to acquire for advancement," Lopez said. "The instructor provides about eight weeks of actual face-to-face instruction."

CD-ROM courses offer more choices through modern technology, but they also have some drawbacks. "There's a limited number of CDs, so you have to share with others who want to take the course," *Essex*

Right: Adjunct professor Ms. Carrie Carr of Central Texas College gives individual attention to a Sailor during a PACE class.



Crewmember Fire Controlman Chief David Cather said. “And just motivating yourself is difficult.” Yet he quickly adds that there’s no other program like PACE, which will cover 100 percent tuition.

Carr explained that the difference between working with civilian students and working with military students is the way they approach education. “A lot of the civilian students aren’t as interested in challenging themselves. The military students want to devote more to learning, because they have more at stake and have to overcome more obstacles. They have lived outside their comfort zone.” She ex-

plained that they can’t afford to be vacillating about their education. If they really want to take classes, they can’t use the excuse that work or watches are getting in the way.

Cather, who is currently taking three courses through Distance Education, echoed her remarks, saying he had to learn how to manage his time effectively if he wanted to succeed with his education. “You have to manage your time or you’ll end up failing. You have no choice,” he said. “For every course you take, it probably takes two hours outside class time just to study.”

For the Sailor at sea, time management translates as finding the time wherever you can. Essex

Sailor Mess Management Specialist Third Class Scott Brown said he has seen Food Service Attendants taking advantage of the “down time” between serving meals to study. Both Brown and Cather agree that it is too easy to put education off until it’s too late.

“I waited for a year after reporting aboard Essex before starting school,” Brown said. “Now I tell the guys I work with to get started right away.”

Cather added that a lot of Sailors just miss out on the opportunity while they are still on active duty. “I went through a Transition Assistance Program class last week,” he said, “and the facilitator asked how many people were close to getting their degree. Out of the ten people in the class, I was the only one.”

CAPT Scott Berg, Essex Commanding Officer, said Sailors should take advantage of the many opportunities the Navy offers.

“Education is not only the key to success in the Navy,” CAPT Berg said. “It is the key that opens doors in life. With the programs offered in today’s Navy, there really is no excuse for anyone not to be afforded the opportunity to broaden their education base. The PACE program is one of many education opportunities that Essex takes full advantage of.”

With the PACE program in full swing aboard Essex, Lopez sees the fruit of his labor in both the self-satisfaction gained by the students and the long-term benefits gained by the Navy. “It really helps them when it comes to job satisfaction, promotion and knowledge that they can apply to everyday tasks,” he said.

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3x's a charm...

NAVETS and OSVETS are seeing the light and the economy

Story by JOSN Chris Conklin, *NR* Staff Writer

Photo by PH2 Veronica Birmingham, CNRC Creative Production Division

It has been said that the time a person spends in military service, no matter how long the experience, stays with them for life. Military members may often see the grass in the civilian sector slightly greener. For many, they act on an impulse to stand on greener grass. However some military members who made the decision to leave the service are realizing they have abandoned their calling, a career of service to the military.

The Navy has seen many of its veteran Sailors return to the fleet from civilian occupations. The Sailors, as well as soldiers, airmen, and Marines from the other military branches have re-entered service life through the Navy at an average of more than 1,500 per year since fiscal year 1997, roughly enough Sailors to man five destroyers.

One of the Sailors who returned to military life in this time is Personnelman 3rd Class Brandon Singleterry, who is currently stationed at Navy Recruiting Command (CNRC) in Millington, Tenn.

After serving four years in the Marines from 1990-1994, Singleterry decided to try his hand in the civilian sector. "I just felt I was done. I did my four years and wanted to move on and do something else. It wasn't so much that I didn't like where I was. It was more like a college student graduating and wanting to go out and take on the world... and then I learned it was not such a great idea," Singleterry said.

Singleterry was not out of the military long before he realized he missed the lifestyle and challenge of the armed forces. He began to re-introduce himself to the military by joining the National Guard in the fall of 1997.

In the time after he served with the Marines, Singleterry found it was harder than he thought it would be to get into law enforcement, the career he desired, even with a military background. He also found that the respect he had received and the professionalism was not equal to what he had experienced in the military. "I was a corporal in the Marines, which comes with a certain amount of respect,

and when I stepped out into the civilian world people didn't care what I was in the military. I could have been a general and that wouldn't have mattered. A lot of civilians don't really know the difference, or what you accomplished in regards to your military rank," Singleterry said.

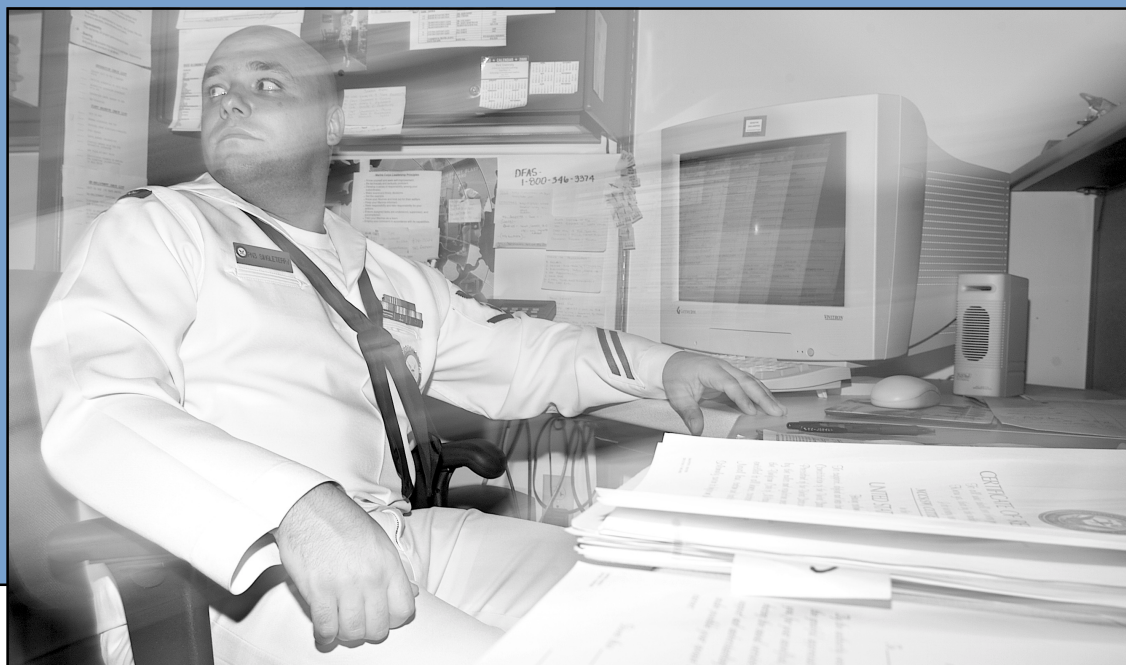
In retrospect, Singleterry was able to compare the two lifestyles. After spending time working as a security guard and at a health club, he decided his place was back on active duty. "The level of responsibility and the things I had seen and done didn't compare to what I was experiencing in the civilian sector. I didn't feel I was growing professionally as a civilian as fast as I could in the military." He continued, "I just didn't feel I belonged to anything of any importance. When you go out and someone asks you 'What do you do?', if you are in the military, you can tell them I am a Sailor, soldier or Marine and be proud of that. I just didn't feel the same pride as a civilian."

Upon making his decision to re-join the military (being a former Marine and not having to repeat basic training), Singleterry was in the Navy within two weeks awaiting his "A" school at a temporary placement unit (TPU) in Great Lakes, Ill.

There has never been a better time for Navy veterans (NAVETS) and OSVETS (other service veterans) to come back into the Navy. Some recent changes include a return to 50 percent retirement pay, significant annual pay increases, targeted pay raises for mid-grade personnel, a new Thrift Savings Plan, and numerous quality of life improvements from reduced inspections to more time in homeport.

Moreover, NAVETS and OSVETS may also be able to come into the Navy with a selective reenlistment bonus (SRB). SRB rates for NAVETs are as follows:

- 75% of SRB with 2 years or less of broken service
- 50% of SRB with 2-4 years or less of broken service



Left: PN3 Singleterry is a blur of action while maintaining the personnel records of CNRC.

Even more impressive is that both NAVETs and OSVETs E-3 and below, who would typically come in at the E-3 level, are eligible for current enlistment bonuses (EB) if they have never before accepted an EB or SRB.

NAVETs and OSVETs can typically re-enter the same field they served in during their previous stint in the service, subject to the manning status of the rating. Sailors can receive training in another rating of their choice where available, if their initial rating is closed.

Also, former Sailors and members from other branches of the military may be able to retain some of the rank they earned when they enter the Navy. Furthermore, former

Sailors are able to go directly to an "A" school after a short stay in TPU. As a result of a recent policy change, veterans of other services are no longer required to attend Navy basic training. They also can report directly to a TPU enroute to "A" school.

CNRC is planning a direct mail campaign to former Sailors who are eligible to re-enlist into the Navy. There are a few requirements a NAVET or OSVET has to meet before re-entering or entering the Navy:

Making the transition

back to a military lifestyle, according to Singleterry, was not nearly as difficult as it was returning to a civilian lifestyle. "Once you know what is expected from you in the military, it's like riding a bike. You never forget it. You just have to start getting back into the groove of how things are supposed to be done. The transition back was not difficult at all," Singleterry said.

The benefits of military life are hard to find in the civilian workforce, according to Singleterry. "You can

find a good paying job and make a decent amount of money, but the benefits like medical, dental and 30 days vacation a year starting out, you can't get that just entering the civilian workforce, not like you get starting out as an E1 in the military." When asked if he would make the same decision to get out of military if given the chance, Singleterry, without hesitation, said, "I would definitely would stay in. I would be that much closer to retirement and a pension."

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NAVET/ OSVET RE-ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

1. If the NAVET/OSVET was E3 and did not pass an advancement exam in their prior service time, time in service must not have exceeded 2 years.
2. If the NAVET/OSVET was E3 and passed an advancement exam and was not promoted, time in service must not have exceeded 4 years.
3. If the NAVET/OSVET was E4, time in service must not have exceeded 6 years.
4. If the NAVET/OSVET was E5, time in service must not have exceeded 10 years.
5. If the NAVET/OSVET was E6, time in service must not have exceeded 12 years.

NAVY PERSONNEL COMMAND LAUNCHES **STAYNAVY.NAVY.MIL** WEBSITE

Story by LTjg Bill Danzi
Center for Career Development
Navy Personnel Command

A new web site that features high-tech, timely and accurate career information for Sailors and their families is now available worldwide. The web site,

www.staynavy.navy.mil, merges the Retention Center On Line into a newly designed site developed by the Center for Career Development (CCD) at Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tenn.

“This web site is designed to provide easily accessible supplemental information pertaining to pay, benefits, duty assignments, rating information and to allow individual record review on line,” said CDR David Alexander, Information Technology Director at CCD.

Alexander said that explaining benefits and offering crucial career information are essential to keeping our Sailors in the Navy. “We’ve recognized the need to provide our Sailors and their families

with access to information required to make crucial career decisions. Historically, this information was not readily accessible,” he added.

Information resources on the web site include:


- **Enlisted Summary Record, Officer Data Card, and Performance Summary Records** Online. Provides Sailors with immediate access to professional records. Service members will be able to verify their professional information and they also will be able to order their microfiche online before an upcoming selection or promotion board.
- **Pay and Compensation Calculator** to assist Sailors and their family members in determining how much they would have to earn in the civilian market to replace their current income.

- **REDUX vs. High-3 retirement comparison.** Members who have to make a choice

between the \$30,000 bonus at 15 years of service or the High-3 retirement option can use this feature to best determine which option is in their best interest.

- **Rating Research Aid** to provide a central and integrated source of information about any rating to include descriptions, entry qualifications, career map, SRB calculator, advancement trends, and education information. A search tool is offered to Sailors interested in striking for a particular rating or to use a conversion process such as SCORE.

- **Assignment Research Aid** to assist Sailors making transition decisions or using JASS. This tool will help them search by rate and geographic area to find an estimate of future billet openings. Additionally, a multitude of local links will be available to assist Sailors in finding information about a new location or to help them



[Your Professional Record Online](#)
[Rating Research Aid](#)
[Assignment Research Aid](#)
[Pay and Compensation Calculator](#)
[Feedback](#)

Center for Career Development

Featured Items

Seaman to Admiral-21 (STA-21) program overview

USS Carl Vinson Hosts Retention/Attrition Stand Down
In an effort to keep Sailors better informed, improve their quality of service and enhance their careers, the command retention team of USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) put together a retention/attrition stand down to help their shipmates with career choices. [\(more...\)](#)


Navy Personnel Command Milestones in the War for Talent
The Navy Personnel Command's Center for Career Development achieved several milestones in its efforts to provide information Sailors and their families need to make sound career decisions. [\(more...\)](#)

Message from NPC Center for Career Development Master Chief Davis and NCCM Gammon on ARGUS
I would like to request your support in promoting and using one of the Navy's newest and best tools for understanding retention behavior called the Argus Center Milestone Tracking System. ARGUS website is: <http://argus.nprdc.navy.mil>. NAVADMIN 027/01 outlines use of this system as to be the Navy's primary retention assessment tool for all levels of the chain of command. [\(more...\)](#)

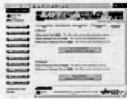
Navy Personnel Command and USS John F. Kennedy Help Four Brothers Stay Navy.
Four brothers are staying Navy to serve together aboard Mayport, Florida-based USS John F. Kennedy (CV67), thanks to the dedicated efforts of Kennedy's career counselors and the Yeoman detailer team at Navy Personnel Command, Millington, TN. [\(more...\)](#)

New Tracking System Gives Commands Better Access to Career Decision Data
In an effort to provide command retention teams the tools to accomplish their mission in the war for talent, the Navy has announced a new, standardized retention monitoring system. [\(more...\)](#)

If you recently reenlisted, transferred to a new duty station, or were ad



Assignment Research Aid
This [link](#) will provide you a dynamic view of the locations that are available. This includes an estimate of billet availability based on your PRD. Remember, your detailer will have the most accurate information on billet




Your Professional Record Online
This [link](#) will provide you immediate access to your professional record and allow you to verify your information online! Check it out.

Quick Links
(direct from the source)

[Navy College](#)
[Link Magazine](#)
[Perspective Magazine](#)
[JASS](#)
[Selective Reenlistment Bonus \(SRB\)](#)

ARGUS



e-mail

YOUR DETAILER

Career Decision Fair

<http://www.staynavy.navy.mil/mainFramePage.htm>
5/30/01

make transition decisions.

The best of the Retention Center On Line has been incorporated into the Counselor's Corner section. It provides all the tools and information for Counselors and Sailors previously provided by the Retention Center On Line web site.

The Center for Career Development was established to help the Navy strike a more

equitable balance between recruiting and retention. While retention is and always will be a command responsibility, CCD helps provide the Fleet with the tools necessary to keep the Navy's high-quality Sailors in uniform. CCD is part of the Navy's continuing efforts to improve Sailors' quality of service – that is, a balanced combination of quality **NR** life and quality of work. To that end, one of the Center's main objectives is to foster a professional climate in which retention is a culture rather than a single event **NR** conducted when a Sailor reaches a career decision

RECRUITER ST NAVY RECRUITING



Story and photos by
JOSN Chris Conklin, *NR* Staff Writer

Navy recruiters can expect quicker service when ordering their recruiter assistance devices (RADS).

May marked the end of the transition period for moving all RADS from Fort Knox, Ky., to Millington, Tenn., where Navy Recruiting Command's (CNRC) new warehouse was established last year.

The move will benefit field recruiters almost immediately according to Navy Career Counselor Chief Petty Officer (SS) Jerry Blackburn, CNRC's distribution Team Leader. "The turn-around time of the old warehouse averaged five days to three weeks. Now, with all the shipments of items coming directly from here (CNRC) the Distribution team is setting their goal for a twenty-four hour turn-around time," Blackburn said. "Now recruiters in the field should only have to wait two to three days



to receive their RADS."

In addition to all products coming from CNRC, to benefit recruiters the online recruiter store has had some changes as well. Prior to the move recruiters had to fill out order forms online for products. The revised site is now more user friendly taking the recruiter step-by-step through the ordering process.

Another improvement the move offers CNRC and recruiters is better inventory control. Recruiters will not be able to over order items. This will allow all stations to get their share of

STORE COMMAND



Left: The new warehouse in Millington, TN will maintain every RAD Navy recruiting has to offer.

each item. This also allows CNRC to see what item is being used where and, how many to re-order. “We hope to overcome communication problems we have seen in the past. With stations receiving orders through Fort Knox, the margin for error was greater in misunderstanding quantities,

and we either send too much or too little of the product. Now, we can review orders before they leave the warehouse and ensure they are right,” Blackburn said.

According to Blackburn, the biggest difference recruiters will notice is the customer service. “We have total control

of what is going where now, which is going to benefit recruiters. In the past we did not have a crew to handle Navy recruiting only. We have a crew specific to the Navy now.

Blackburn also suggested that all recruiters become familiar with the ordering process on the Recruiter Store on Showcase. Using this method of ordering will ensure accurate shipment of the items

Oral Cancer

Know the risks

**Story courtesy of
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
Washington, D.C.**

The most common form of oral cancer is known as squamous cell carcinoma. It classically develops as a crater-like lesion, having a velvety red base with rough edges similar to a very bad "pizza burn." However, it may appear as white patches, with some irregular red patches, mixed together in its earlier stages.

An important aspect of squamous cell carcinoma is its location within the mouth. The lower lip and the tongue are the most frequent sites with the floor of the mouth not far behind.

Lesions are usually solitary but in some cases have been found to occur in groups. The concern with the location is certain areas allow the cancer an easier route to spread to other parts of the body, metastasize, and lessen chances for a good prognosis. Lesions found on the back third of the tongue have the greatest chance to metastasize, usually to lymph nodes in the neck.

As with most cancers, we still don't know everything about what causes squamous cell carcinoma, but we do know what increases the risks of developing it.

The use of tobacco products (smoking, snuff, pipe, cigar, etc.) is a major risk factor, but also the use of alcohol products has been found to increase the risks of developing the cancer.

When these two risk factors are put together, it becomes the greatest risk factor. This is why the highest occurrence of oral cancer is found in the middle-aged to elderly male population who have a history of tobacco and or alcohol use.

The treatment of squamous cell carcinoma depends on several factors: time of detection, size of tumor, spread of tumor, etc. Treatments range from surgical removal of the tumor, radiation of the tumor

or chemotherapy. Most occurrences will require a combination of these treatments.

The overall five-year survival rate for all oral cancer patients is about 40 percent. This percentage is increasing as we are detecting the cancer earlier and educating patients to the risk factors associated with the cancer.

It is important that patients periodically examine their mouths for any changes that could be associated with oral cancer. A self-exam is fairly simple and could save a patient's life. It must be understood there is little, if any, pain associated with oral cancer until the very late stages. Therefore, it is imperative people routinely stand in front of the mirror and actually look inside their mouth.

Use a mirror with good lighting, open your mouth wide enough to see all of your teeth and the back of your throat. A good time to do this is right after you brush your teeth. Look at the insides of your cheeks, the roof of your mouth, your tongue (especially the sides as far back as possible), the floor of your mouth, your gums and the inside of both of your lips.

Note anything that appears to be an odd color, texture, or shape especially when it is only found on one side of your mouth. Keep in mind that early signs of squamous cell carcinoma usually show up as white or red patches or some combination.

Should you find anything suspicious, schedule an appointment with your dentist for a professional exam, especially if you fall into one of the high-risk groups (use of tobacco and or alcohol). Your dentist should examine an ulcer in your mouth that doesn't heal within two weeks. Dentists routinely do an oral cancer screening upon your normal check-ups, but do not neglect to do a self-exam on your own mouth at least once a week.

Remember, the earlier squamous cell carcinoma is detected, the better the prognosis. As with all oral health concerns, prevention is the key to success. **NR**

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NR June 2001

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